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# New law targets water safety

**PERCHLORATE:** It mandates limits on the chemical, which has been found in some Inland wells.

BY MICHELLE DeARMOND  
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Water agencies that fail to comply with new limits on a thyroid-damaging pollutant found in some Inland water supplies could be shut down under a law signed Sunday by Gov. Davis.

The law would require the state to study and to adopt a goal for perchlorate levels in public water systems by Jan. 1, and to set that level as the statewide standard by Jan. 1, 2004. It would be illegal to exceed the limit, and agencies that don't comply could be ordered to stop selling their water, said state Sen. Byron Sher, D-Stanford.

Some critics said Sunday the law would have a negligible effect given that many agencies already are meeting the lower proposed goals.

Perchlorate, a component of rocket fuel, is known to cause thyroid ailments and problems for pregnant women and young children, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"The contamination of drinking water supplies by perchlorate may result in a number of troubling health effects," Davis said Sunday morning after signing the legislation. "I believe this is additional evidence of our attempts to improve water quality in this state."

## Found in Inland wells

The contaminant has been found in groundwater supplies in inland Southern California for decades, forcing the shut-down of some wells. Water sup-

PLEASE SEE WATER, A4

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**ENVIRONMENT:** Other measures signed by Gov. Davis. **A4**

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# WATER: Inland legislator says new state law isn't needed

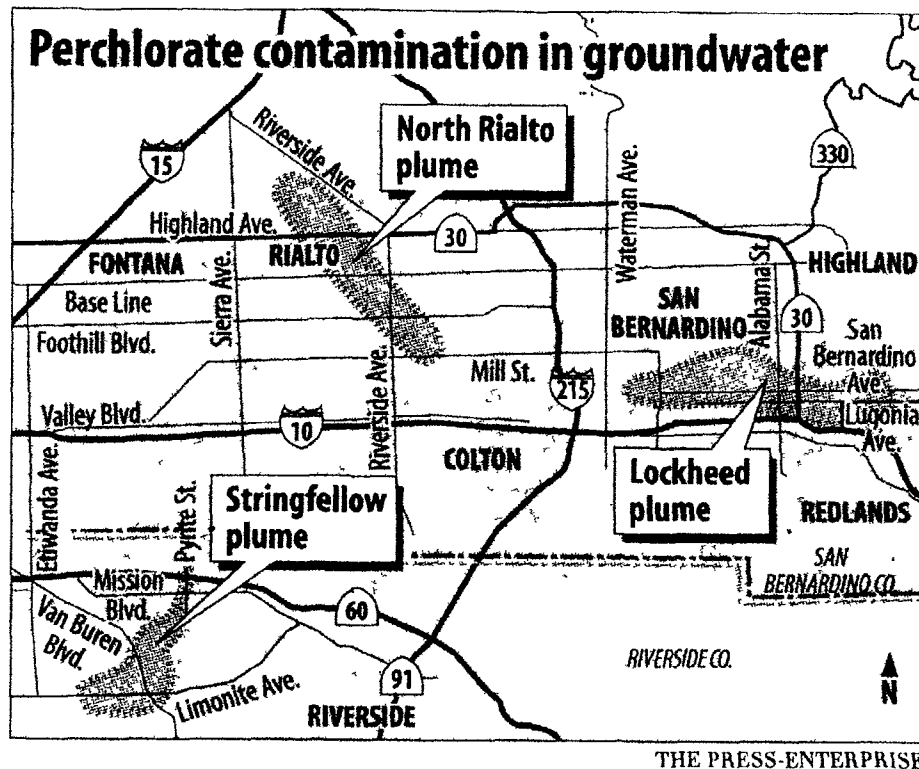
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plies in Riverside, Loma Linda, Redlands, San Bernardino, Jurupa and other areas have been tainted by the chemical, which is believed to come from businesses that used perchlorate and a landfill where munitions have been stored.

Water agencies already have been working to find alternate water sources and to clean up the contaminated sites, especially since state and federal officials earlier this year proposed lower public health goals for perchlorate than had previously been recommended.

"We don't need the state government coming in and hammering our locals when they're actually doing their job," said Sen. Ray Haynes, R-Riverside. "To assess penalties and to set a statewide standard seems to be killing a fly with a sledgehammer. This bill does nothing except get a headline."

Haynes was one of two senators to vote against the bill, S.B. 1822, and the only Inland senator to do so. Haynes predicted the law eventually will cause higher water rates because of additional testing and adminis-



trative costs that agencies will pass on to customers.

## Redlands' approach

Douglas Headrick, chief of water resources for Redlands, said the new law would have virtually no effect on the city, where officials expect to have a new water supply in place by mid-2003. The city also is working on a system to remove perchlorate from existing water supplies.

"We're not comfortable with delivering water with any of it in it," he said. "I think this is too important of an issue to just sit around and do nothing."

Headrick said his agency already is conducting regular tests for perchlorate and other contaminants, and he didn't expect the law to have any real effects on costs. He expects that the federal EPA eventually will set a 1 part per billion limit.

Currently, the EPA has made only recommendations about proper levels. California is the first state to pass a law that will set limits. Another 15 to 20 states are considering following suit, Davis said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommended earlier this year the chemical should be limited to 1 part per billion. The state Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment proposed a goal of 6 parts per billion. The man-made pollutant has been found in dozens of Inland drinking wells, with some registering as high as 65 parts per billion.

Tom Pevehouse, a Riverside-based consultant for Inland Strategies Inc., which consults with some water districts, said the law may be confusing because of differences between state and federal standards, but probably won't change much for Inland agencies.

"I don't know that water districts are even real panicked about this," he said.

Staff writer Jennifer Bowles contributed to this report.  
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